

# The Religious Freedom Amendment—What It Does

The Religious Freedom Amendment (RFA) will correct 36 years of Supreme Court decisions which have warped the original plain and simple meaning of our religious rights under the First Amendment to the Constitution. Here are highlights of what it will do:

- **For the first time, our Constitution will mention America's belief in God.** Every one of our 50 states have an express reference to God within their state Constitutions. The Religious Freedom Amendment does so for the federal Constitution; it echoes the words in the Declaration of Independence, where our Founding Fathers wrote that our unalienable rights come not from government, but are an endowment from our Creator.
- **Student-initiated and voluntary prayers could be voiced in public schools, whether in classrooms, school assemblies, graduations, sporting events, or other occasions.** Court decisions restrict almost all school prayers; the minor exceptions are usually limited to clubs which gather before or after the school day, and even then only with special controls. The RFA does **not** permit teachers or any other agent of government to proselytize, or to dictate that any person must join in prayer, or to prescribe what prayer should be said.
- **The Ten Commandments could again be posted in public schools and other public buildings.** The Supreme Court banned the Ten Commandments from school buildings in 1980, but the RFA directs that the people's religious beliefs, heritage and traditions may again be recognized on public property, including schools. *(However, the RFA **expressly** maintains the prohibition on any official religion for America!)*
- **Holiday displays such as Nativity scenes and menorahs, and the singing of Christmas carols, would be protected on public property.** The Supreme Court has made it difficult or impossible to recognize special occasions, and the threat of lawsuits has intimidated schools to go even farther than the Court has dictated. The RFA fixes this.
- **Government programs could not use religion as an excuse to deny a benefit.** There could be no direct government subsidy to any religion or church, but when government creates a program that furthers other purposes, it could not exclude any group because of their religious affiliation. For example, any government aid to non-public schools would have to include families who send their child to a church-affiliated school. As another example, if private drug treatment programs are funded, faith-based drug treatment programs could not be excluded.

## The Religious Freedom Amendment (House Joint Resolution 78)

“To secure the people's right to acknowledge God according to the dictates of conscience: Neither the United States nor any State shall establish any official religion, but the people's right to pray and to recognize their religious beliefs, heritage or traditions on public property, including schools, shall not be infringed. Neither the United States nor any State shall require any person to join in prayer or other religious activity, prescribe school prayers, discriminate against religion, or deny equal access to a benefit on account of religion.”